How to Defeat the Motorized Rifle Company At the National Training Center:

Observations from an MRC Commander

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Over the past decade, the National Training Center's Opposing Force (OPFOR) has served as one of the toughest opponents that its Blue Force (BLUFOR) opponents will ever face. The OPFOR's track record has been so consistent that one of its former colonels has described it as "the anvil upon which we have hammered and forged the combat power of our Army."[1]

In his article, "Reaching Our Army's Full Combat Potential in the 21st Century," Colonel John D. Rosenberger pointed out the many reasons why the OPFOR is successful against its adversaries. This essay aims to support and to refine those arguments from the level of the motorized rifle company (MRC). It will provide a brief background about how the individual MRC is composed, who leads it, and how it fights. Finally, this essay will discuss the relative advantages and disadvantages of the OPFOR and the BLUFOR in the areas of tactics, experience, weapons systems, numerical superiority, and unit cohesion. From an assessment of these five core areas, this essay will conclude that the BLUFOR company team can defeat the OPFOR MRC provided it takes full advantage of its relative strengths and the OPFOR's weaknesses.

The OPFOR Motorized Rifle Company

Before examining the relative strengths and weaknesses of the BLUFOR and the OPFOR, it is essential that one discuss the nature of the OPFOR motorized rifle company. It typically consists of three T-80s and eight BMP-1s or BMP-2s. During each rotation, each armor troop from 1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment combines with its counterpart infantry troop from 2nd Squadron to form a motorized rifle battalion (MRB). Each 1st Squadron troop provides 9 to 10 tanks and 3 BMP-1s, and each 2nd Squadron troop provides 24 to 26 BMP-1s or BMP-2s. The MRB is typically divided into three MRCs. An MRC commander commands each MRC with the aid of his deputy, his counterpart platoon leader from a sister troop. In the OPFOR, every leader controls a unit one increment larger than its equivalent in BLUFOR. Thus, a lieutenant typically commands an MRC, while a captain commands an MRB.

Prior to contact, the MRC moves out in column. During a tactical road march, an MRC commander typically sends one or two BMPs forward of the MRC as forward patrols (FPs). These FPs provide "security forward of an attacking FSE or MRB on the primary route of advance."[2] Additionally, the FPs can serve to link the MRC with the next forward MRC. If a particular MRC is first in the order of march, its FPs can tie in that MRC with the combat reconnaissance patrols (CRPs). These patrols normally consist of three BMPs and one or two BRDMs, which conduct reconnaissance for the MRB five to ten kilometers "in front of the forward patrol on the primary route of advance."[3]

When enemy contact is likely, the MRC transitions from an MRC column to a platoon column formation. Some MRCs prefer to put three T-80s at the front of their columns so that the tanks can deploy laterally while the trailing BMPs fall into their respective motorized rifle platoons (MRPs). Other MRC commanders allow their MRPs to travel together in column in a T-80…BMP…BMP… T-80 …BMP…BMP sequence. Both techniques have their respective advantages and disadvantages. Once enemy contact is imminent, the MRC deploys into a single line of three MRPs using terrain to mask their maneuver. Figures 1, 2, and 3 demonstrate each of these formations respectively.

OPFOR vs. BLUFOR: Advantages and Disadvantages

While fighting at the National Training Center, both the BLUFOR and the OPFOR have relative advantages and disadvantages. In order for BLUFOR commanders to defeat the OPFOR MRC, it is essential that they understand their relative advantages over the OPFOR and how they can exploit these advantages. There are five major areas that can serve as a basis for comparison between the OPFOR and the BLUFOR. These areas include tactics, experience, weapons systems, numerical strength, and unit cohesion.

The first basis for comparison is tactics. Most rotational units rely heavily on material found in *FM 17-15*, *FM 7-7J* and *FM 71-1*. For a tank-pure com-

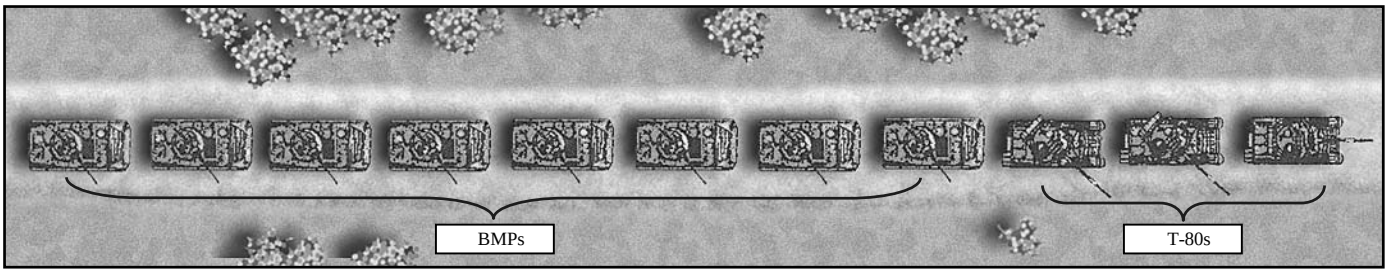

Fig. 1. OPFOR MRC in Column Formation

pany team, the BLUFOR fights with three platoons of four tanks each. This company team is integrated into a task force of at least two other tank or mechanized company teams. In turn, this task force and one or more others constitute a brigade. During a fight, the smallest maneuver unit is a tank or a mechanized infantry platoon, each of which consists of four vehicles. One of the reasons why the BLUFOR is organized in this manner is to enable the smallest unit possible — the platoon — to act independently while in contact to ensure that it meets the commander's intent. In fact, *FM 71-1* explicitly addresses this issue:

"When soldiers expect the commander to make every decision or initiate every action, they may become reluctant to act. To counter this tendency, the commander must plan and direct operations in a manner that requires a minimum of intervention. He operates on the principle that some loss of precision is better than inactivity."[4]

In theory, this doctrine operates upon the implicit assumption that the unit in contact with the enemy is in the best position to make a timely and aggressive decision. It requires units at the lowest level (platoons) to make and execute these decisions. Ideally, a commander should ensure that all his subordinates understand his intent and are prepared to execute it in his absence.

Although a focus on local initiative and independent decision-making is part and parcel of American mechanized doctrine, small units rarely exercise this flexibility at the National Training Center. The failure of American mechanized doctrine at the NTC cannot be blamed on its theory, as it is based on an extremely successful style of leadership. Rather, its failure lies in what many would describe as a "zero defect" culture within many units in the American military. Leaders do not make independent decisions because they fear the consequences of making a mistake. More often than not, a BLUFOR platoon will come to an abrupt halt once they report contact and await further instructions from higher units. Instead of seeking cover and beginning to develop the situation on their own, they sit and wait for instructions from higher echelons to engage the enemy. In the inevitable delay that follows, their OPFOR counterparts engage them and pound their stationary vehicles with artillery. It seems that the tendency of many commanders to insist upon "precision" rather than local initiative results in the frequent stagnation of some BLUFOR units on the NTC battlefield.

In stark contrast, the OPFOR operates with a doctrinal derivative of the Soviet military command system. This system operates on a rigid command structure in which units move in lockstep and in precise formations toward preordained points on the battlefield. "The Soviets emphasize swift, efficient movement, or transfer, of combat power from one point on the battlefield to another. Units frequently rehearse the march, and its conduct is strictly controlled."[5] The advantage of Soviet doctrine, therefore, is speed. Additionally, the OPFOR MRC successfully couples this speed with the local initiative so characteristic of American military doc-

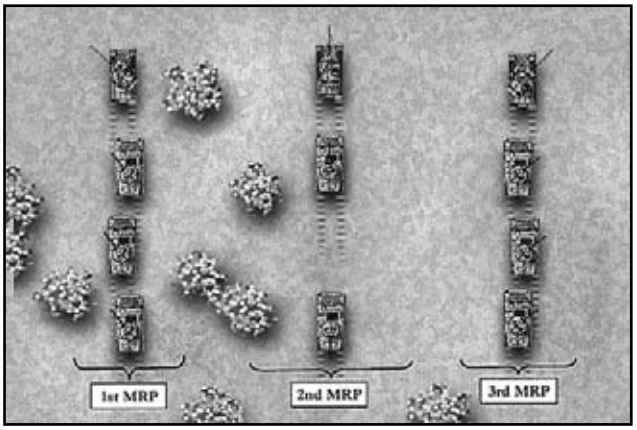

Fig. 2. OPFOR MRC in Platoon Column Formation

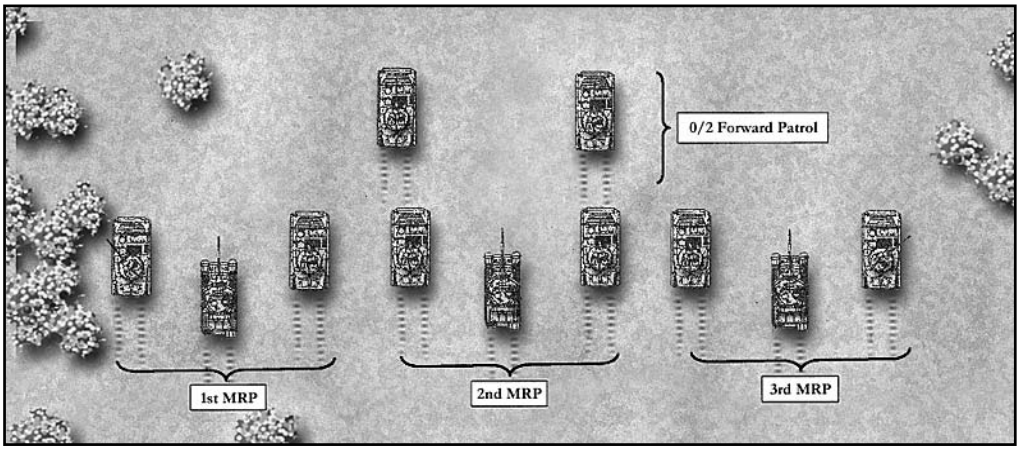

Fig. 3. OPFOR MRC On Line

trine. The result of the amalgamation of these two disparate doctrines is a fast and flexible MRC. A prime example of this system in practice is the MRC radio net. Although the lowest unit in an MRC is the MRP, the lowest level at which information is conveyed is at the MRC. To enable the MRC commander to maintain strict control over every vehicle in his MRC in accordance with Soviet doctrine, all vehicles in the MRC are on one radio net. Although this makes it difficult for the MRC commander to process information from his subordinates, it reduces one layer of delay in the dissemination process. Any information passed down from the MRB commander is instantaneously passed on to every vehicle in the MRB by each MRC commander. Since all MRP subordinate vehicles are monitoring on the MRC net, there is no need for each MRP commander to repeat, and possibly to distort, each situation report. Because all vehicles in the MRC are on the same net, each vehicle has access to nearly perfect situational awareness. With this knowledge, MRC commanders can trust their senior NCO MRP leaders to react to the enemy independently while simultaneously following the MRC commander's intent.

A second major advantage to the OPFOR command system is the operations order. Its simplicity gives every vehicle in the regiment a clear idea of the regiment's objectives. Colonel Rosenberger's article describes the effectiveness inherent in the simplicity of the OPFOR orders process:

"Take the operations order. Only one written operations order is published for the regimental combined-arms team, which addresses multiple courses of action. Tasks to subordinate units are always expressed in the form of task and purpose. Only one set of graphics is produced and every leader in the regiment, from top to bottom, uses this one set of graphics. Subordinate units do not develop their own, unique graphics. In other words, every member of the combined-arms team is looking at the same sheet of music. Subordinate commanders issue their oral operations orders, based on a clear understanding of what they have to do, when they have to do it, and where they have to do it."[6]

It is interesting to note that Colonel Rosenberger clearly mentions that subordinate commanders base their orders on "a clear understanding of what they have to do, when they have to do it, and where they have to do it." He makes no mention of "how they have to do it." He does this ostensibly because the OPFOR's success lies in its ability to maximize initiative at the lowest unit level. Thus, although the original intent of using one single published order may have been to replicate the Soviet command style of rigid leadership, it has since enhanced the ability of the OPFOR MRC to maximize local initiative and decision-making in nearly every battle it fights. Although OPFOR doctrine is designed to maintain strict control over all subordinate units, the OPFOR MRC fights in a manner that is much more oriented toward the fundamental intent of American doctrine — a focus on independent initiative and decision-making at the lowest possible level.

The irony of these two doctrinal systems is that neither the BLUFOR nor the OPFOR uses them as they were intended. BLUFOR tends to operate under a very rigid command structure where leaders at the lowest level seem to be discouraged from taking local initiative. Of course, American doctrine is not designed to operate this way. In contrast, the OPFOR's doctrinal system is intended for use in a very rigid command structure where strict orders are passed from higher to subordinate units. Doctrinally, individual units are strongly discouraged from taking independent initiative and operating outside of command directives. In practice, OPFOR battalion commanders allow their subordinates to take more risks and to exercise more initiative in combat. They allow their MRC commanders to make their own decisions based on the local situation in their sector. MRB commanders use mistakes as learning points for future battles and are willing to accept them so long as their subordinates strive to better themselves in the process. In essence, the OPFOR is successful because they practice the true intent of American doctrine — that of the importance of local initiative — despite the fact that their own Soviet-based doctrine strongly discourages such independent action from subordinate units. If more BLUFOR units fought the way American doctrine intended, they would be far more successful on the NTC battlefield.

The second area of comparison is experience. At NTC, there are three areas where experience comes into play. These areas are leadership experience, experience fighting on particular terrain, and individual experience. On two out of three of these areas, the OPFOR has a clear advantage. However, if BLUFOR were to capitalize on a third, they would be much more successful on the NTC battlefield.

At the NTC, BLUFOR company commanders have a tremendous advantage over their OPFOR MRC commander counterparts. First, all BLUFOR commanders have a minimum of four years of tactical and leadership experience. Second, all of them have been educated at the Captain's Career Course for several months prior to assuming command. Put simply, they have more leadership experience and training than their OPFOR counterparts to accomplish their mission.

In contrast, all MRC commanders are lieutenants — many of them second lieutenants — with little to no tactical experience. After learning how to direct platoons in combat situations at the basic course, they are required to command a company-sized element upon arrival at the NTC. This step is not difficult to take conceptually, but is very challenging in practice. MRC commanders are also given fewer resources to accomplish the mission then their BLUFOR counterparts. Instead of three four-vehicle platoons, they must accomplish similar missions with three platoons of three vehicles apiece and a two-vehicle FP element.

While BLUFOR commanders may have a clear advantage in leadership experience, the OPFOR MRC has two tremendous experiential advantages of terrain knowledge and battle experience. The majority of troopers at the NTC have fought over the same ground repeatedly. They have fought with their units for long periods of time and frequently fight in similar tactical situations over the same ground. Because of these two factors, a unit can be successful in battle regardless of whether or not it has an inexperienced commander. In contrast, the soldiers of many BLUFOR units are fighting on unfamiliar

terrain. They are also fighting in a series of unusual tactical situations that are difficult to replicate at their home stations.

Therefore, although the OPFOR MRC has a relative advantage in regard to an intimate knowledge of the terrain at NTC and more experience per crew than their BLUFOR counterparts, the BLUFOR has more experienced leadership. To be successful, BLUFOR commanders should take advantage of this experience whenever they face an OPFOR MRC.

The third basis for comparison is the difference between the weapons systems of the BLUFOR and the OPFOR. At the NTC, the BLUFOR weapons systems are technologically superior to their OPFOR analogues.

The greatest differential between weapons systems exists between the M1A1/A2 and the visually modified T-80. Because the M1A1/A2 has stabilization, it can fire on the move. In contrast, a visually modified T-80 lacks stabilization and must stop before it fires its MILES laser. The M1A1/A2 also has a tremendous advantage with its range. According to the SAWE/MILES II Handbook, the range of the 120mm main gun of an M1A1/A2 is 3750m, whereas the range of the T-80's 125mm main gun is 2500m. In practice, most T-80 lasers cannot kill targets beyond 2000m. As a result, the M1A1/A2 has nearly twice the range of a T-80 on the MILES battlefield. While the T-80 does have a complement of five AT-8 missiles with a similar range to that of the M1A1/A2 main gun, the limited number of missiles fails to establish range parity during longer engagements and the T-80 must expose itself for ten seconds to guide its missile toward a target.

The M1A1/A2 system is also vastly superior to the OPFOR T-80 at night. While every M1A1/A2 has a functional TIS or TTS, only a select number of T-80s have functional TTS systems. In the past, most MRBs have had four or fewer T-80s with functional TTS systems. While these numbers have been increased over the past few months, the Sheridan TTS system's quality is vastly inferior to that of a typical M1A1 TIS and an M1A2 TTS. The Sheridan TTS quality is inferior because it has been degraded through years of use and there are very few resources at the NTC to maintain these TTSs adequately. Therefore, the M1A1/A2 possesses a tremendous advantage against the T-80 at night.

According to NTC standards, the M1A1/A2 also possesses greater lethality and survivability than the T-80. From a comparison of the probabilities in Figures 4 and 5, it is clear that the M1A1/A2 has a significant lethality advantage over the T-80 on three out of four sides of the vehicle. The only side that the T-80 weapons systems have a higher probability of kill is the rear of the M1A1/A2.

In a one-on-one fight with an M1A1/A2 firing at the front slope of a T-80, and the T-80 firing at the front slope of an M1A1/A2 with its main gun (the most common engagement), the M1A1/A2 is three times more likely to kill the T-80 than the T-80 is to kill the M1A1/A2. Even if a T-80 uses a missile against an M1A1/A2, the M1A1/A2 is still more lethal than the AT-8 is against the front slope of M1A1/A2. Against the flanks, the AT-8 has an equivalent probability kill to the M1A1/A2's 120mm.

Not only is the M1A1/A2 more lethal than the T-80, but it is more survivable. Figures 4 and 5 demonstrate that on three out of four sides, the M1A1/A2 is more survivable than the T-80.

In contrast, the BMP-1 and the BMP-2 have a slight edge on the M2A2/A3, as demonstrated by the kill probabilities in Figures 4 and 5. On the MILES II battlefield, the BMP-1 and BMP-2 are both more survivable and possess greater lethality than the M2A2/A3 Bradley. However, the M2A2/A3 Bradley possesses an advantage over the BMP-1 in regard to stabilization and night fighting. Like the T-80, the BMP-1 must stop movement in order to fire its main gun and rarely possesses a TTS. The fielding of the BMP-2/OSV has begun to remedy both of these problems.

The BLUFOR also possesses a significant advantage with the use of artillery. The NTC Rules of Engagement prohibit the OPFOR from killing over 50 percent of BLUFOR combat vehicles with artillery. The BLUFOR possesses no similar restriction. Theoretically, the BLUFOR can kill 100 percent of the OPFOR by artillery alone. From the MRC commander's perspective, BLUFOR frequently starts its attack with impressive momentum. However, the moment many BLUFOR company teams transition from movement to maneuver and initiate contact with an OPFOR MRC, the BLUFOR company-team stops. When a BLUFOR company team stops, it becomes highly vulnerable to artillery. It seems that some units in the United States Army have forgotten a bitter lesson that goes back to World War I. In *Achtung-Panzer!*, Major-General Heinz Guderian pointed to a lesson the French learned when they attempted to capture the Chemin-des-Dames on 23 October 1917. He wrote that the French discovered that "the tanks were liable to heavy losses whenever they were standing still within sight of the enemy, and in

	T-80			BMP-1			BMP-2		
	Front	**Side**	**Rear**	**Front**	**Side**	**Rear**	**Front**	**Side**	**Rear**
120mm	30%	40%	45%	70%	80%	90%	70%	80%	80%
25mm	0.5%	0.5%	1%	10%	15%	20%	10%	15%	15%
TOW	25%	35%	30%	70%	90%	100%	70%	90%	90%

Figure 4: OPFOR MILES II Kill Probabilities[11]

	M1A1/A2			M2/M3		
	Front	**Side**	**Rear**	**Front**	**Side**	**Rear**
T- 80 125mm	10%	40%	80%	80%	90%	100%
AT-3 (BMP-1)	10%	40%	90%	60%	80%	90%
AT-5 (BMP-2), AT-8 (T-80)	10%	40%	100%	70%	90%	100%
BMP-1 73mm	0.5%	10%	30%	10%	20%	30%
BMP-2 30mm	0.5%	0.5%	1%	5%	10%	15%

Figure 5: BLUFOR MILES II Kill Probabilities[12]

the future this should be demanded only in case of emergency;"[7] More than eighty years later, many BLUFOR units consistently make this same mistake.

Neither side possesses a significant advantage with the employment of smoke in both the offense and the defense, but the OPFOR MRC tends to utilize the effects of smoke more effectively than their BLUFOR opponents do. *FM 90-3* states that the "lack of cover and concealment in flat desert terrain makes the use of smoke more vital to survival."[8] Without smoke, it is very easy for enemy forward observers to call fire missions on an attacking or defending unit. Effectively employed smoke can be extremely frustrating for an OPFOR MRC commander. Despite the well-known effectiveness of smoke, most BLUFOR units fail to use it. Only two units effectively employed smoke between Rotations 99-10 and 00-08, most notably when an attacking BLUFOR unit inundated the Central Corridor with smoke in Rotation 00-04. Where smoke was effectively employed, the results were devastating for the defending OPFOR MRCs.

Therefore, if a BLUFOR company team takes full advantage of the M1A1/A2's ability to fire on the move, superior range, firepower, survivability, and night-fighting capabilities; uses the TOW system of the M2 Bradley to provide long-range overwatch for the M1A1/A2; maximizes the company team's ability to call for fire; and judiciously uses smoke to cover the company team's movement, a BLUFOR company team will be successful against a smaller OPFOR MRC.

The fourth basis for comparison between the BLUFOR company team and the OPFOR MRC is numerical strength. In the early nineties, the OPFOR did frequently outnumber the BLUFOR by as much as two to one. In recent years, the situation has changed drastically. In a standard rotation, an MRB defends with 7 tanks and 17 BMPs, while the standard BLUFOR task organization consists of 44 M1A1s and 44 Bradleys. These numbers present an attack to defend ratio of 3.67:1, greater than the standard requirement of 3:1. Although these numbers are quite typical, there have been cases where one MRC has defended against light brigades. In a Rotation 00-05 defense, 11 vehicles from an MRC defended against 22 tanks and 40 Bradleys — an attack-to-defend ratio of almost 6:1. In another defense during Rotation 00-04, an MRB with 9 tanks and 28 BMPs defended against 116 tanks and 90 Bradleys — again, an attack-to-defend ratio of nearly 6:1. In the latter case, assuming that all tanks targeted only tanks and all Bradleys targeted BMPs with their main guns with only frontal shots, simple statistics dictates that the expected value of BLUFOR kills on the first shot fired would be 34.8 T-80s and 9 BMPs. On the other hand, the OPFOR's expected value of first shot kills would theoretically destroy .9 M1A1/A2s and 2.8 Bradleys using the BMP-1 or 1.4 Bradleys using the main gun of the BMP-2. Keep in mind that these calculations assume that every vehicle on both sides scores a hit on its first shot and BMPs and Bradleys do not use their AT or TOW systems. From an analysis of this raw data, it is clear that when the BLUFOR attacks the OPFOR, BLUFOR units have an overwhelming advantage, not only in numerical strength, but also in simple statistical probability. Consequently, the laws of probability overwhelmingly favor the BLUFOR in the attack.

In the regimental attack against a BLUFOR defense, the regiment is never afforded similar odds. A BLUFOR package defends with 44 tanks and 44 Bradleys. Although the OPFOR may be allowed to operate with more vehicles than the BLUFOR, it rarely ever exceeds a 2:1 ratio.

At the company level, the BLUFOR armored company team has an overwhelming statistical advantage over the OPFOR MRC. If an armored company team were to face an OPFOR MRC in a frontal engagement for one round, two M1A1/A2s fired on each T-80, all BMPs attacked with their AT-5 missiles, and every vehicle hit another on its first shot, 1.1 M1A1/A2s, 5.6 BMP-2s, and 1.8 T-80s would be destroyed. Rounding, after one round of the engagement, the armored company team would have 13 tanks left, while the OPFOR MRC would have 1 T-80 and 2 BMP-2s. In short, if an OPFOR MRC is pitted against a BLUFOR armored company team, it has little chance of survival if it stands its ground. Of course, OPFOR MRC commanders mitigate these almost assured chances of destruction by maneuvering their MRPs against an armored company team's flanks and rear to maximize the MRC's kill probabilities.

To add to these numerical imbalances, the OPFOR frequently does not even have enough crewmembers to adequately man every vehicle at the MRC level. There have been several rotations where four or five vehicles in some MRCs will operate with two-man crews — a driver and a tank commander. In such an arrangement, the tank commander of a visually modified T-80 does not have the luxury of his own independent sight. Instead, he must acquire the target as a tank commander and then drop down into the gunner's station to aim and fire at the target. The sheer inefficiency of such a system should put the vehicles at a tremendous disadvantage against their BLUFOR counterparts. In contrast, many BLUFOR crews seem to be much slower on the draw because they either have more difficulty in identifying targets in desert terrain, are unfamiliar with their equipment, or simply do not take action until they are ordered to do so from higher for fear of committing fratricide. It is probably safe to conclude that the last of these three explanations is probably the most plausible explanation.

If the BLUFOR has overwhelming superiority in both numerical strength and a much greater theoretical chance of killing the OPFOR, why do they encounter so much difficulty? Although the BLUFOR typically has numerical superiority and has a higher mathematical expected value of winning, the OPFOR MRC is usually more successful because it masses its forces at the critical point in battle. As Clausewitz attested, "the superiority at the decisive point is a matter of critical importance, and that this subject, in the generality of cases, is decidedly the most important of all." Success depends not on the absolute number of a force but rather the relative number applied at the decisive point in battle. The size of a force is critical, but so is the skill to which that force is utilized.[9]

If the typical company team has a good situational awareness and is aggressive, they can use their superior numbers to overwhelm one MRC. A BLUFOR platoon of M1A1/A2s is more than capable of destroying a typical OPFOR MRP of one T-80 and two BMPs. If one tank section focused on the T-80, and the other focused on the two BMPs, they would simply overwhelm them. If two platoons worked in concert, they could annihilate them in detail with one platoon fixing them and the other enveloping them. As long as the company team maintained its momentum and established rolling support-by-fire and attack-by-fire posi-

tions, they would never have to contend with artillery. While one platoon fixes and another platoon envelops, the third platoon could advance to the next rolling support-by-fire where they fix the next OPFOR platoon. If the typical BLUFOR company team commander were to give his subordinates more local autonomy and forced them to fight fluidly (i.e., maintain their momentum), that company team could easily overwhelm echelons of MRCs pitted against it. It seems that many BLUFOR company commanders are never able to capitalize on the numerical superiority of their formations because they waste too much time awaiting orders, adhere rigidly to a plan that no longer matches the current tactical situation, and piecemeal themselves into battle. If the lowest unit — the platoon, were empowered to take more independent action, the BLUFOR company team would be a force to be reckoned with.

The fifth basis for comparison is unit cohesion. At NTC, it is critical that units coordinate with one another and fight well together. Frequently, many BLUFOR units come together for the first time at NTC. A company team is sometimes pieced together with a random mix of M1A1/A2s and Bradleys, from different units that have never trained together. Because they have not fought together for very long, some company teams tend to fight in a random and haphazard manner. For instance, a company team mix of Bradleys and M1A1/A2s will frequently attack an MRC with the Bradleys forward of the tanks. Because the next intervisibility line has not been cleared, the Bradleys frequently get surprised and destroyed by OPFOR vehicles, leaving the M1A1/A2s without infantry support. Had some of these units been together longer, they would discover in practice, that the Bradley's strength prior to enemy contact is its TOW system. If, prior to contact, Bradleys used their TOW systems to overwatch the movement of the M1A1/A2s as the M1A1/A2s cleared intervisibility lines, they could instantly engage any OPFOR vehicles that surprise the M1A1/A2s. Once the enemy had been identified, the M1A1s could close within coax distance and then the Bradleys could move forward to dismount infantry on restrictive terrain. Too often, BLUFOR company team commanders rush to get their dismounts to the high ground before the intervening distance is secured. More often than not, they pay dearly for their mistake.

On the other hand, the OPFOR has much better unit cohesion, because individual MRC commanders fight only as a combined arms team and they train only as a combined arms team. Perhaps Colonel Rosenberger said it best:

"Fundamentally, the warfighting ability of the OPFOR stems from how it is organized. It is organized as a combined-arms team. It lives together as a combined-arms team, and it fights as a combined-arms team — all the time. It is not a collection of units, thrown together on an *ad hoc* basis from various divisions and installations, who have never trained together, or a collection of units within a division which task organize and train infrequently as a brigade combat team."[10]

To counter this notable advantage, BLUFOR commanders should make every available effort to train as much as possible with their sister units. If this is not possible, they should focus every available amount of time they have on joint rehearsals to mitigate potential problem areas on the NTC battlefield.

While the OPFOR MRC can be a daunting foe and may possess major advantages in its use of tactics, soldier experience, and unit cohesion, a BLUFOR commander can frequently best his MRC counterpart by taking advantage of his superior tactics, leadership experience, weapons systems, numerical superiority, and unit cohesion. To improve his use of tactics, a BLUFOR commander must provide his leaders with a profound situational awareness of the battlefield, empower them to take initiative in his absence, and encourage his subordinates to take risks during training prior to arrival at the NTC. A BLUFOR commander can maximize his superior leadership experience by isolating individual MRCs on the battlefield. In doing so, he forces the opposing MRC commander to make decisions in a vacuum. Ultimately, in such a situation, the BLUFOR commander's superior experience will prevail. A BLUFOR commander can capitalize on his superior range, mobile firepower, and night-fighting capability by emphasizing these advantages during training at his home station. Doing so will force his subordinates to use these advantages instinctively against their technologically inferior foe. As noted above, the typical BLUFOR commander possesses numerical superiority both in sheer numbers and in kill probabilities. Consequently, a BLUFOR commander can afford to be, and should be, aggressive at the NTC. Finally, a BLUFOR commander should make every conceivable effort to train with attachments at his home station. If he is unable to conduct joint training with these units, he should make every effort to coordinate and train with them during joint rehearsals. If a BLUFOR commander maximizes these advantages, success will be a certainty at the NTC.

Notes

[1]Colonel John D. Rosenberger, "Reaching Our Army's Full Combat Potential in the 21st Century," *ARMOR*, May-June 1999, p. 8.

[2]11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, *MRC Handbook*, 24 March 1999, p. 9-4.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Department of the Army, *FM 71-1, Tank and Mechanized Infantry Company Team*, 26 January 1998, p. 2-2.

[5]Department of the Army, *FM 100-2-1, The Soviet Army: Operations and Tactics*, 16 July 1984, p. 5-1.

[6]Rosenberger, p. 12.

[7]Major-General Heinz Guderian, *Actung-Panzer!*, trans. by Christopher Duffy, (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1995), p. 71

[8]Department of the Army, *FM 90-3, Desert Operations*, p. D-5.

[9]Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, (London: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 266.

[10]Rosenberger, p. 8.

[11]11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, *SAWE/MILES II: Simulated Area Weapon Effects/Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System II*.

[12]11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, Annex D, *Miles Handbook*, May 1998.

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